



**PRESENTATION
TO
STATE OF MICHIGAN JOINT HOUSE AGRICULTURE
AND
HEALTH POLICY COMMITTEE**

Good afternoon, my name is Dan Lennon and I am the President and CEO of the Michigan Turkey Producers. I am here to speak on behalf of our 430 plant employees, 200 farm employees and 16 turkey growers who own and operate 43 West Michigan Turkey farms. Between the wages we pay our employees, the Michigan feed our turkeys consume and our utilities and supplies usage, the Michigan Turkey Producers generate in excess of \$75 million of economic benefit here on the west side of the state.

The topic being discussed today is Avian Influenza. I will attempt to characterize, from a producer perspective, what I believe are some media-created misconceptions or falsehoods regarding Avian Influenza and I will share what actually is occurring in this area in our organization. I will also provide several suggestions for the committee that we feel are critically important "next steps" which will require legislation.

Avian Influenza has generated a tremendous amount of media coverage in the past several months. One could easily infer from the constant almost daily reference to Avian Influenza that:

1. All avian influenzas are the same and are harmful.
2. An outbreak of harmful AI in America is imminent.
3. The America poultry industry is ill prepared to deal with a crisis.
4. If disease did come to our shores that it would go unchecked.

I believe all 4 of these inferences are false.

Falsehood #1.....All AI are the same and are harmful.

There are many subtypes of Avian Influenza and it is easy to generalize that all these types are harmful. The truth is that two types of AI are generally recognized to be very harmful to poultry, and they are the Hemagglutinin 5 (H5) and Hemagglutinin 7 (H7) types. These can either be low pathogenic (LPAI) or highly pathogenic (HPAI) for birds. The current "Asian Flu" or "Bird Flu" is a highly pathogenic H5 N1 Strain Type Z. The United States does not have nor has it ever had this strain of H5 N1 Avian Influenza. This is the only Avian Influenza strain that has been linked to human cases of bird flu in Asia and more recently the Country of Turkey. Further, this highly pathogenic H5 N1, Strain Type Z is linked to people only by intimate contact with H5 N1 infected sick or dead birds.



Falsehood #2.....An outbreak of harmful AI in America is imminent.

The United States has never imported poultry products from Southeast Asia and since the Asian flu crisis erupted, the U.S. government has also prohibited importation of live birds and other potential carriers of Avian Influenza. Scientists are routinely checking migratory wild birds and to date there is no indication that HPAI is moving in the Western Hemisphere via that route. Humans are a possible vector as well but unlike Southeast Asia and several other outbreak countries, in America human contact with live birds is either non-existent or is severely restricted.

Falsehood #3.....The poultry industry is ill prepared to deal with a crisis.

The commercial poultry industry is aggressively testing flocks to confirm absence of disease, even in obviously healthy birds. At Michigan Turkey, we have been blood-testing flocks in an active surveillance program since 2002. Birds are tested at 3 separate ages. If an issue exists we know about it, we report it to our State Veterinarian and we subtype to determine if the AI is potentially harmful. Again, not all AI is harmful and the subtyping dictates whether we should take further action or not.

In addition, many other biosecurity measures are in place. Access to our farms is restricted. Delivery vehicles are sanitized inbound and outbound. Personnel tending to flocks wear personal protective equipment where appropriate. This is in stark contrast to many other countries where birds are commonly raised in backyards and are sold in crowded live bird markets.

Falsehood #4.....If harmful disease did come to our shores it would go unchecked.

Diligent surveillance on commercial farms is in place industry-wide. It is extremely unlikely that birds carrying a harmful virus will ever leave the farm. In Michigan, we have in place a Michigan Emergency Avian Disease Manual that was produced by the Michigan Department of Agriculture in cooperation with the Michigan State University Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health, Michigan Allied Poultry Industries and Michigan Area Veterinary Services. This manual outlines a detailed decision tree to deal with any disease situation up to and including the depopulation and disposal of a flock, the protection of all personnel involved and the cleaning and disinfection of the premises.

In summary, Michigan Turkey Producers and our Allied Poultry partners have anticipated the possibility of human health risks associated with highly pathogenic Avian Influenzas. We have stringent biosecurity and an active surveillance protocol in place to detect an issue, should it arise, plus an Emergency Avian Disease plan in place to prevent spread and to eradicate an issue on farm should it arise. These practices have been formally in place for 4 years. This is the way we run our business, it is not "window dressing" but is a necessary on going management tool.



At Michigan Turkey Producers our mission has always been to provide great tasting, wholesome product to our customers and we will continue to do whatever is necessary to achieve that goal.

What can you do? Much discussion at the national level and actual Federal appropriation of funds to date have focused on vaccines and/or health care preparedness. Clearly this is important. Of equal importance is prevention of the disease from gaining a foothold in the U.S. We are asking that: 1) State and Federal Legislators move quickly to establish an indemnification plan so that IF a HPAI is detected and IF depopulation on farm is warranted, the grower and the industry are protected. Deploying financial resources exclusively on the health care or treatment side of the issue is likely far more risky to human health than a proper detection and eradication program on the farm; 2) Relook at funding available to the Michigan Department of Agriculture, specifically the State Veterinarian's office. They currently do not have a poultry Veterinarian on staff and have been under a hiring freeze for the past 2+ years; and 3) Relook at funding available for the MSU diagnostic laboratory which has gone from 80% funded by the state to 20% funded by the state in the last 15 years. And finally we need to be sure that MSU Extension has the staff and resources they need to support industry in the area of disease surveillance and prevention strategies. In short, please be sure that resources are allocated to prevention and containment and not just to treatment should an outbreak occur.

Thank you for your time and attention.



WEST MICHIGAN ECONOMIC IMPACT*

- ❖ **405 jobs created amounting to nearly \$10.1 million in payroll and \$3.3 million in benefits.**
- ❖ **Feed consumption of 4.5 million turkeys**
 - 50M tons of soybeans or \$10 million
 - 7.5 million bushels of corn or \$15 million
- ❖ **Utilities**
 - 700,000 gallons of water/day or \$450,000/year.
 - Waste water \$150,000.
 - 16-18 million kwh/year or \$1.0 million year
 - Gas at \$700,000
- ❖ **Other Annual Plant Expenditures**
 - \$3-4 million in supplies/chemicals.
 - \$1-2 million in packaging.
 - \$1-2 million in maintenance/repair
 - \$1-2 million load and haul (tires, gas, labor)
- ❖ **200 jobs at the farm level worth approximately \$4 million in payroll and \$1.5 million in benefits.**
- ❖ **Poult expenditures of \$6.9 million.**
- ❖ **43 Farm locations and associated tax base.**
- ❖ **Other Farm Expenditures**
 - \$12-14 million in maintenance, supplies, equipment, medicine, etc.

TOTAL ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT = Over \$70,000,000/year

***NOTE: This Economic Impact excludes the impact of the new plant location. The new plant location will add 62 new jobs and between \$5-10 million of additional economic impact.**